



Alberta Education School Nutrition 2016/17 Pilot

Summary

Alberta Education School Nutrition Program

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ALBERTA EDUCATION SCHOOL NUTRITION 2016/17 PILOT SUMMARY

Introduction

The Government of Alberta is working to make life better for Alberta families. To help prepare students for a healthy future, Premier Rachel Notley and Education Minister David Eggen officially announced a school nutrition pilot on November 14, 2016. The pilot launched in 14 public and separate school authorities across the province, including 10 rural and four urban school authorities, selected based on greatest need as determined by socio-economic status data. Self-identified First Nations students attending provincial schools under Education Services Agreements were also included in the pilot. A two-page profile of each school authority's pilot is included in the Appendix.

"Access to a daily nutritious meal can really help children's grades and prepare them for a healthy and successful future. That's why we are proud to introduce a targeted school nutrition program."

- Rachel Notley, Premier

Pilot Delivery and Student Participation

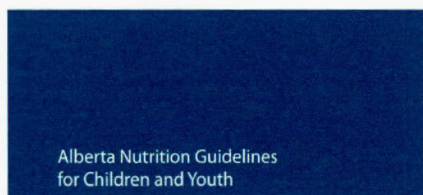
The school nutrition pilot was designed to provide students in select Kindergarten to Grade 6 schools across Alberta with a daily nutritious meal during the 2016/17 school year that adheres to the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. The guidelines are designed to promote healthy food choices and healthy attitudes about food.



For the pilot, each school authority was provided with \$250,000 in grant funding to feed Kindergarten to Grade 6 students in one or more schools. School authorities were given the flexibility to determine the timing of the meal, be it breakfast or lunch each day, with the option to provide a nutritional snack as well, depending on what was most needed in their schools.

School authorities were required to demonstrate effective financial management of the \$250,000 grant allocation. Suggested funding was \$5.00 per student, per day, including food costs and other necessities required to address food storage, preparation and nutrition services.

While there are several opportunities to address health, wellness and nutrition throughout Alberta's current curriculum, a key component of the pilot was to ensure students, teachers, parents, caregivers and community members had the opportunity to learn more about the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. This included the importance of reading food labels, choice and preparation of healthy foods, and access to Alberta's food resources.



A Childcare, School and Recreation/Community Centre
Resource Manual



Alberta Government

The objective of this approach was to build students' capacity for lifelong healthy nutrition practices and chart the path for a nutrition program model sustainable for schools.

As a result of the pilot, more than 5,000 students in 33 schools received a daily nutritious meal, with some school authorities also choosing to support an additional school with a daily snack. By piloting in both urban and rural school authorities, Alberta Education was able to determine the impact on students who received a daily nutritious meal and inform the viability of implementing a provincewide school nutrition program in 2017/18.

Supporting Research

The pilot was informed through environmental scanning of school nutrition programs across Canada and the world, as well as a literature review on school nutrition programs, and an online survey. The online survey was conducted to determine what, if any, school nutrition programs were in place in Alberta public, separate and Francophone school authorities. The literature review provided a foundation for the development of pre-pilot survey questions and provided informed support to school authorities throughout the pilot. Key topics addressed in the literature review included:

- nutrition and chronic disease such as childhood type 2 diabetes;
- nutrition requirements;
- student performance and nutrition;
- accessing affordable food for school nutrition programs; and
- educating students about healthy nutrition.

More than 5,000 students in 33 schools received a nutritious meal each day as a result of the pilot. Some schools also provided a snack each day.

While the immediate effect of the school nutrition pilot is expected to be felt in the classroom, the Government of Alberta also wants to build students' capacity for lifelong healthy eating and nutrition.

Successes

While each participating school authority was tracking the pilot success to determine how we are helping students, Alberta Education's nutrition pilot team gathered anecdotal evidence from school authority reports and site visits throughout the pilot as a means of identifying early success indicators. Participating school authorities completed a monthly summary to capture information about each of the 14 school authorities' progress in the 33 selected schools.

The following results were reported:

- 2,560 breakfasts served daily;
- 2,912 lunches served daily; and
- 2,623 snacks served daily.

The 14 participating school authorities shared observations about the pilot, including:

- 12 out of 14 school authorities indicated improved student attendance;
- 10 out of 14 indicated a decrease in negative student behaviour incidents throughout the day (e.g., some teachers indicated that students were able to regulate themselves more effectively and students appeared to be more engaged in the learning processes);
- 13 out of 14 indicated improved student understanding of healthy food choices (e.g., 12 schools noted a change in attitude towards food with students trying new foods or foods they did not like); and
- 13 out of 14 indicated an increased sense of community and belonging in the school (e.g., students involved in planning and delivery of the pilot).

"The pilot is impacting the way that the school can offer support to students who are struggling to maintain focus and engage in their learning...it starts with filling their tummies."

- Staff member, Red Deer Public Schools

2,560 breakfasts served daily

2,912 lunches served daily

2,623 snacks served daily

Innovation Leading to Promising Practices

Many innovative approaches were used to implement the pilot across the province:

- At Vera M. Welsh Elementary School in Lac La Biche, not only did the elementary students benefit from receiving a daily nutritional meal, the culinary arts students at J.A. Williams High School prepared and delivered the lunches, earning credits while gaining valuable work experience.
- Medicine Hat School District worked with a biology professor from the local college to augment science programming through a “seed-to-table” program. The school authority also established a partnership with a local greenhouse to build garden towers in the school.
- High Prairie School Division established partnerships with local grocers, allowing schools to purchase produce at a very reasonable cost.



These are just a few examples of the innovative approaches school authorities used to implement the pilot.

Through the pilot and its allowance for creativity and flexibility, participating school authorities identified the following promising practices:

- universal access to nutrition programs;
- promotion of the concept of seed-to-table;
- enhancement of curriculum through discussions about nutrition with students involved in the program;
- respect for cultural diversity;
- capacity building for the delivery of nutrition programs;
- multiple delivery models based on school and community needs and resources;
- collaborative community partnerships; and
- consideration of impacts on the environment.

“I see other people trying new foods, and I want to try them, too.”

- Student, Medicine Hat School Division

Universal Programs

The school nutrition pilot was highly inclusive, incorporating the voices of students, parents, guardians, teachers and the wider school community. Universal programs mean that meals are available to all students within the community.

Universality has provided many social benefits and reduced negative stigma for students and families, in particular, reducing trauma for new immigrants to Canada. Staff monitored students' needs and worked to build an increased sense of community as students learned to break bread together.

Embracing Cultural Diversity

The Government of Alberta is focused on ensuring all learners experience a sense of belonging and receive a high quality education—no matter their ability, disability, language, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Participating schools worked to incorporate cultural activities and traditional foods into the pilot.

- Ben Calf Robe School in Edmonton worked with local Elders to incorporate traditional Indigenous foods into their pilot and also started a cooking club for students.
- At W.A. Day School in Fort Macleod, the school was using the *Canadian First Nations, Métis and Inuit Food Guide* and worked with various community members who are passionate about sharing their culture with the school community.
- At Fairview Elementary School in Red Deer, halal menu options were available for students and the school to celebrate cultural diversity with a potluck supper where families were invited to bring a meal representative of their culture.

These are just some examples of how schools worked to embrace cultural diversity through the school nutrition pilot.



"We've seen first-hand the impact of school nutrition in the classroom, from better focus and improved grades to increased social skills and higher energy levels."

- Janice Curtis, Executive Director,
Calgary Meals on Wheels

Collaborative Community Partnerships

Building sustainability and expanding programming is an important goal for school nutrition programs in Alberta, so it is essential that school authorities foster community partnerships in order to build capacity.

The innovative community partnerships developed by the schools participating in the school nutrition pilot are as diverse and varied as the communities in which they are located.

Several collaborative partnerships have developed between school authorities and local organizations such as grocery stores, greenhouses, church groups, volunteer associations and local farmers. These partnerships focus on shared goals while leveraging the strengths of the school and the community, ultimately, building capacity and helping to ensure programs are sustainable for schools in future years.

Moving Forward

Based on the findings from the pilot, the Government of Alberta has committed to moving forward with Phase 2 for the 2017/18 school year by reinvesting in the original 14 school authorities participating in Phase 1 and also including the 48 remaining public, separate and Francophone school authorities in the province for the 2017/18 school year.

"It's been incredible to witness the unique and innovative approaches that school authorities have taken to implement the pilot and the resulting impact it is having in the classroom. I'm excited for this next phase as we continue to meet the basic needs of our students, while charting the path towards a nutrition program model that is sustainable for schools."

- David Eggen, Minister of Education

Ten million dollars are being allocated to Phase 2 of the program. In order to not adversely affect what was put into place to date, the 14 school authorities who participated in the pilot will continue to receive \$250,000 in grant funding, while the 48 remaining school authorities will each receive \$141,000 to implement the program in 2017/18. While planning for innovation, sustainability and capacity building, school authorities will use this funding to support students with the greatest need.

Alberta Education is working with participants to help ensure the program is sustainable for school authorities. The 14 school authorities currently participating in Phase 1 will share best practices and act as part of the mentorship group to new program participants in Phase 2. In addition, Alberta Education held a series of meetings with community partners, researchers and other stakeholder groups to gather their input on the pilot. These stakeholders continue to be involved in order to help build capacity, inform best practices and increase networking and partnership opportunities.

Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Calgary Board of Education

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The division hired Calgary Meals on Wheels for food preparation and delivery. Meals on Wheels has a registered dietician on staff who is knowledgeable about the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. The division's *Administrative Regulation 3047-Nutrition* has also been provided and discussed with members of the Meals on Wheels team. The team also refers to *Canada's Food Guide* and the *Alberta Health Services Breakfast Program Toolkit* to develop sample menus.

At Marlborough School, the Principal Advisory Group surveyed students about nutrition needs, food choices, allergies, intolerances and sensitivities. It was Marlborough School that developed the first model for the program, and then the other schools based their programs on the Marlborough model. Each school has a specific goal to provide high quality, daily nutritional breakfasts. Meals include foods from four food groups, with individual portion sizes consistent with *Canada's Food Guide*.

The division used the annual student health forms to identify allergies. Staff members are informed of all allergies and the list of concerns is posted in the staffroom. Common allergens are communicated with Meals on Wheels and are eliminated from menu choices (e.g., peanut products). The division is working with staff and parents/guardians to incorporate cultural/religious practices such as Ramadan, Lent and Passover.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The division sent a letter to parents introducing the breakfast program, provided a general announcement in their newsletter, and sent another letter home once details could be provided about the program's goal, funding and mandate. Program information was available at Parent Council Meetings and at winter concerts in December. The division has also connected with the Calgary Immigrant Society through resource fairs during parent-teacher conferences.

INTERESTING FACTS

Banting and Best School

- 226 K-3 students
- 120 to 130 breakfasts served daily

Bowcroft School

- 267 K-6 students
- 140 breakfasts served daily

Marlborough School

- 205 K-5 students
- 85 breakfasts served daily

-
- 2 to 4 staff per school co-ordinate the pilot program and completed *Food Safety Certification*
 - Marlborough School has a large population of recent refugees, with classes comprised of more than 60 per cent of students who are English Language Learners
 - The division also has a *Fuel for School* breakfast program in 20 schools

INNOVATION

Some infrastructure and food-handling capacity had to be brought into the program. The division purchased a commercial cooler and also has one residential fridge and a small commercial beverage cooler. At Bowcroft, a central lunchroom is used for serving breakfast. Some parents have also joined in for the daily breakfasts. These are among the most marginalized families and would not otherwise participate in the school community. At Banting and Best and Marlborough schools, students can take their food to the classroom. Teachers integrate breakfast into the daily classroom routines.

"We are aware that students bring cultural beliefs that impact their food choices. Respecting those beliefs includes supporting students to make informed personal choices about nutrition."

– Staff member, Calgary Board of Education

The program was implemented in phases. In Phase 1, Meals on Wheels provided breakfast in individual breakfast trays, each tray containing four food groups. Breakfast trays were delivered daily, as Marlborough school did not yet have storage capacity, safe food handling training, or the required Alberta Health Services Food Handling Permit in place. In Phase 2 (October 2016 to June 2017), Meals on Wheels is providing bulk service five days per week, with delivery to Marlborough School two days per week. Bulk service includes choices of four food groups in individually-wrapped 'grab and go' packages. Students select foods from each of the four food groups to build their own meal.

At Banting and Best School, other efficiencies include avoiding the use of trays. Children use napkins to carry food as trays took a long time to clean and food is served from recyclable boxes.

RESULTS

Daily morning routines for teachers now include checking in with all students to ensure that they have had breakfast and their basic need for food has been met. There are student trackers at the table each morning to see what food choices are the most popular. The number of breakfast servings offered and consumed is recorded daily. Anecdotal records of unfinished portions are recorded weekly, as are anecdotal teacher comments about the program. Information will also be collected from staff through surveys.

To engage in action research and provide a flexible, scalable program, program coordinators meet regularly with staff to talk about areas for improvement. One aspect that has been helpful is to allow children to eat at their desks or at tables while a learning opportunity such as quiet reading occurs in the classroom. To further engage staff and students, health-focused questions are posted on the school bulletin board.

Of course there have been challenges. Children not eating all the food, teachers adjusting their schedules to accommodate student's eating their breakfast in the classroom, creating an effective process for children receiving their food, and managing the storage of the food received for the program, are a few. To handle these challenges, staff use the breakfast block to teach the children about nutrition, manners, body awareness (what does hunger feel like?), self-regulation strategies, waste in our world, and recycling.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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June 2017

Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Calgary Catholic

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

At Calgary Catholic, both school principals piloting the nutrition project work as a team to coordinate with their outside vendors. Finding fun and exciting ways to follow the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* (ANGCY) is part of the opportunity and the challenge. To help out, Comprehensive School Health Consultant, Barb Duncan, shares menu items with Calgary Catholic's Alberta Health Services (AHS) Health Promotion Coordinator. AHS in turn works with the vendor to advise on food choice and the ANGCY guidelines.

The schools used a three-phase approach. In Phase 1, there were two outside vendors: Brown Bagging for Calgary Kids and Meals on Wheels. The schools monitored the vendors and regularly reviewed menus and choices to ensure not only that the ANGCY guidelines continued to be met, but also that the students were fully engaged with the program. Brown Bagging for Calgary Kids delivered lunch and a snack two times a week.

In Phase 2, Meals on Wheels delivered hot lunches three times a week. By this time, all students in need were provided a hot lunch. Based on their action research and differences in philosophical approach, Brown Bagging for Calgary Kids was phased out in January 2017. The schools believed that Meals on Wheels could fully deliver their program, for now.

Phase 3, which ran from February to June 2017, also phased in a partnership with the high school foods program, allowing students to prepare and cook food in the lab. Family cooking nights in the lab were planned, and schools were very excited about this.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Calgary Catholic considers continued support from parents and the community as crucial to the success of their program. After the initial letter sent to parents to introduce the lunch program, schools now provide updates and nutrition information on their website, and through social media, newsletters, and school council meetings. Staff can also access information at team/staff meetings. Assessment is an important part of the program's success, and Calgary Catholic planned to bring parents and students into that assessment picture through a satisfaction survey. The schools are gathering data about their menus, adherence to the guidelines, vendor meetings, the number of lunches served on a monthly basis, and taste-testing activities.

So far all feedback has been positive and constructive. As a result, they have changed some menu items, modified procedures for distributing food, and will be offering family cooking nights.

INTERESTING FACTS

Holy Family School

- 200 K-6 students
- Monday/Wednesday/Friday – 140 lunches and snacks daily; Tuesday/Thursday – 130 lunches and snacks daily

St. Peter School

- 250 K-6 students
- Monday/Wednesday/Friday – 220 lunches/snacks daily; Tuesday/Thursday – 180 lunches/snacks daily
- One staff member per school to co-ordinate the project
- Two staff per school trained and certified as food handlers
- A very diverse demographic

INNOVATION

Schools are using allergy and food intolerance data from their district medical forms to inform staff and the vendor(s), and they are continuing to gather information through a questionnaire. Schools consistently improve their model through reflection, feedback and anecdotal information. They have implemented a constant loop for gathering and analyzing data about food preferences, student and parent feedback, and food quantities.

"Students are very excited each day about lunch and regularly ask, 'What's for lunch today?' They go out of their way to tell the principals how much they enjoyed a certain food."

– Staff member, Calgary Catholic Schools

LOCAL FLAVOUR

Learning about nutrition can empower students. Now that the program has been in place for several months, students are participating in some elements of food preparation. They are also offering food samples for students to taste. Classroom sessions on nutrition, delivered by the school nurse, give students a strong health perspective. Feedback from students about the pilot project has been positive. Students are eating foods they have never tried before. The schools are cautious of food allergies and mindful of their data, providing new flavours such as celery and raw carrots, as well as familiar foods.

The pilot project is partnering with the high school foods program to coordinate visits to the foods lab and field trips to the grocery store to identify healthy foods. Through the high school foods program, there is scope to contemplate what it means to break bread with one another.

Effective systems and procedures have been developed in the gym to set up and distribute food to students during lunch. Facilities at a nearby high school are used to make the lunch sandwiches.

Calgary Catholic purchased a fridge and smaller appliances like panini-makers, microwave ovens, a reach-in cooler, food service equipment, and thermal and dry good totes. They looked at converting a storage room off the gym at Holy Family School for future kitchen needs. St. Peter has a food prep and storage area with a double sink, fridge, freezer, microwave, toasters, and high-temperature dishwasher.

RESULTS

Challenges faced by the schools include accurately ordering the right amount of food, dealing with disposable dishes and cutlery and considering compostable dishes and cutlery. It is a complex program to develop and implement quickly, and schools found there is a need to be flexible and adaptable.

Staff report that students are more focused in class in the afternoon and there are anecdotally fewer discipline issues. Students are reporting that they are eating and enjoying foods they may never have eaten otherwise, and they say they are eating more fruits and vegetables than before.

All students are eating when they are hungry; some students previously would not eat if they did not have a lunch because they reported they were embarrassed or too shy to ask.

Schools have also heard from community sports organizations, families, and churches that word about the program is reaching them too and have commented about how lucky the schools are to be part of the program.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Canadian Rockies

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

At Elizabeth Rummel School, Canadian Rockies Public Schools uses an outside vendor called Iron Goat Catering Services. It is a long standing community business that is very aware of nutrition guidelines and safe food preparation and storage. Iron Goat's menus follow the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. It provides three to four food groups per meal, focusing on "choose most often" foods. Canadian Rockies phased in the program by getting parent feedback on a sample menu and collecting information such as allergies, food preferences and restrictions. Iron Goat Catering Services also accommodates requests for gluten free, vegetarian and nut free foods. The pilot program is run by the local project coordinator who administers the day-to-day program, collects data, and supports the *Food for Learning* portion of the project.

Elizabeth Rummel School has existing kitchen facilities. They were looking at increasing refrigeration capabilities and adding a stove, microwave and dishwasher.

Traditional foods are incorporated into some school celebrations, and students also learn about food and nutrition as part of their study of various cultures.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Communication with parents/guardians is being effectively conducted through announcements to school council, newsletters, surveys, the school's website, school board meetings, articles in the local newspapers, and committee/ advisory group meetings. Parents/guardians were given the opportunity to sign their child(ren) up for the mid-morning meals and hot lunches.

A school-wide message goes out every week as students announce a nutritional tip on the morning announcements. For staff, information is shared through staff meetings.

RESULTS

Feedback from teachers and students has been used to adjust the menu on an ongoing basis. Feedback from the community has helped inform decision to include other schools in the pilot, where possible.

The school is recording observations in order to adapt the menu on a frequent basis. In addition, focus groups with staff, students and parents/guardians provides feedback on the program. Alberta Health Services is also helping the school to develop an end-of-pilot survey.

INTERESTING FACTS

Elizabeth Rummel School

- 330 K-3 students
- 307 breakfast snacks served daily
- 290 hot lunches served on Mondays

The project team looked to see how best to support nutrition for all students in K-6 throughout the school district. A need for additional support is emerging at Exshaw School and, therefore, the division is seeking ways to support students in more than one school by redistributing the program funds.

The pilot program is an opportunity for staff to collect real-world data about nutrition that can in turn be used in the classroom. The program has been a source of conversation at multiple levels and has increased the focus on nutrition, food availability, and food and its relationship to learning.

To make the project work, Canadian Rockies formed new relationships with a service provider, sought and responded to advice from stakeholders, managed waste, and determined the appropriate portion size for students.

Some of the challenges included keeping meals at the correct temperatures during transport and serving. Parents/guardians and children have been asked to bring empty Tupperware containers on hot lunch days for students to pack up leftovers, helping to decrease food waste.

"Managing the pilot program includes finding ways to see that the money is being used to support children in the district, regardless of the school they attend."

– Staff member, Canadian Rockies school district

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Edmonton Catholic Schools

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Ben Calf Robe School employs a Wellness Lead Teacher who coordinates the program, meets with cooking staff weekly, and educates students on healthy nutrition and active living. The teacher also liaises between the school, district, parents, community, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education. All feedback is taken into consideration, with priorities being identified in the bi-weekly meetings the Wellness Lead Teacher has with administration.

Ben Calf Robe School already had a full-time cook and cooking assistant to prepare and serve all meals. As part of the pilot program, the cooking staff upgraded their food safety training. The lunchroom is run by the Assistant Principal who organizes students to come in, sets out food for the younger students, and helps the younger ones learn about place settings, serving food and giving back to the community.

Our Lady of Peace School has a comprehensive school health/mental health champion, as does each Edmonton Catholic School. This role is not tied to the nutrition pilot program specifically, rather it is a district initiative to support mental health and wellness – which focuses on nutrition, physical literacy, social emotional learning and student leadership.

There is a nutrition pilot program team comprised of the Program Coordinator and staff from each school. The Program Coordinator collaborates with the administration, school wellness champion/lead teacher, students, Elders, Alberta Health Services, dietitians, and others. It is truly a collaborative process.

At the start of the project, the team met with dietitians to review Edmonton Catholic's goals for the program and ensure the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* would be met in both school programs. Menus for two weeks are received in advance so that the team can review and make any changes. The menu is then posted on the school website so parents can see the daily meals being served to their children.

Each day, kitchen staff visit each of the classes to collect feedback about the meals served. The caterer is also flexible with the menu, depending on the delivery of food products. For instance, if a fruit arrives for the caterer and it does not look fresh, then it will not be accepted and the fruit will be replaced by another fruit that is acceptable.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The cooking staff prepare food from many cultures, including traditional Indigenous foods, as the students are predominantly Indigenous. Edmonton Catholic is working with Elders to create a culture that honours traditional cultural foods, including through a Pow Wow and at the Demonstration of Learning Evening in March. To further honour the Cree Culture/Language school, there is a school cooking club with the students. There is a sense of calmness in the schools resulting from the nutrition pilot program.

INTERESTING FACTS

Ben Calf Robe School

- 351 K-6 students
- 351 lunches served Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
- 351 snacks served daily

Our Lady of Peace School

- 280 K-6 students
- 248 lunches served Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

At Our Lady Peace, two parents were hired to serve the food in appropriate portion sizes and distribute the meals to the classrooms for the younger grades. The upper grades come to the kitchen serving window to receive their food after all the lower grades have received theirs. Additionally, the administration and teaching staff all help out with the lunch program, by serving, pouring milk and dishwashing.

Students are now asking "when are you going to make that again?"

– Staff member, Edmonton Catholic Schools

As the program progresses, feedback from the parent community is helping to shape the pilot. The team feels very optimistic that this pilot project will contribute towards changing the culture within the schools to support healthy choices. It will allow students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes towards leading an active, healthy lifestyle.

Our Lady Peace has an unexpected partnership with Save-On-Foods that has come about because the store learned about the pilot program and that the school has limited capacity to store milk. In addition to an interest in learning more about the school's nutrition program, Save-On-Foods delivers milk to the school.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Parents, guardians and students greatly appreciate the food that is provided. The intention of educating students on healthy living is to create lifelong habits and attitudes amongst the student population. Healthier living would not only have immediate and lifelong benefits for the students, but could also help to decrease the incidence of health issues such as Type 2 Diabetes, which has a high incidence amongst the Indigenous population. Increasing student health and cognitive ability has the potential to increase the likelihood that students will continue with their education and be able to make positive choices as contributing citizens.

The Wellness Lead Teacher supports improved student engagement and cross-curricular learning with regards to making smoothies. Student leaders attended the district's Student Leadership Symposium and learned about the importance of creating healthy school environments. Students will have a voice in a variety of decisions that need to be made, for example, taste testing foods and offering peer presentations.

A neighbouring school, Holy Cross, has offered the use of their Food Facility. Our Lady Peace plans to teach its students how to make healthy snacks when they come home from school. Not only will students be preparing these meals in a real kitchen, but they will also have the opportunity to experience a junior high school setting.

The program empowers student leaders within the school by training grade 5 and 6 students to be the lunch time monitors to assist the younger children during lunch. Grade 5 and 6 students have the opportunity to take option courses to support student wellness. Topics such as healthy eating, honouring Indigenous traditions through healthy eating, active living, and spirituality will be addressed.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Edmonton Public Schools

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Currently, two schools are in the planning stages of the Nutrition Pilot Program, with Norwood School being the first to define the working model that will be used at Inglewood Elementary School. The goal is to transition the existing lunch and snack program to an improved high quality fresh foods approach with menus that meet the *Alberta Guidelines for Nutrition for Children and Youth* (AGNCY).

The school district has a long standing working relationship with E4C – an Edmonton based not-for-profit agency that has been supporting school nutrition for more than 40 years in the Edmonton area. E4C aligns with AGNCY, works closely with Alberta Health Services (AHS), and ensures program delivery adheres to proper public health standards.

Norwood retained a traditional approach to school nutrition for the months of October, November and December 2016, during which E4C worked to build knowledge and capacity with staff, students and parents/guardians. This stage of the pilot was intended to build a shared vision and understanding of the model among all stakeholders. The program transitioned to a fresh foods model in January 2017.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The school district observes that food is cultural and associated with a variety of values and emotions. A food program that is structured as an intervention and is “done” to a school community appears to encourage dependence on the system. For the pilot, the district is exploring how a food program that is developed and shaped alongside or in partnership with a school community can engage, empower and, ultimately, build lifelong capacity and food security for the students.

INNOVATION

Students and their families are actively engaged in helping develop the menus. Schools work to be responsive to food allergies, dietary concerns and cultural and religious food considerations. However, staff in schools are not trained nutritionists and do not have experience in safe food planning and preparation at the scale, quantity and complexity of an entire school community. Three months of stakeholder engagement have built capacity for more than just menu planning. There has also been a focus on food ordering and purchasing; and the storing, preparation, and proper serving of the food (including disposal of any leftover food).

INTERESTING FACTS

Norwood Elementary School

- 276 K-6 students
- 211 lunches served daily
- 211 snacks served daily

Inglewood Elementary School

- 167 K-6 students
- 137 breakfast snacks served daily

In these months of planning and engagement, the district has also looked at how the voice of the students can be factored into the model. Some of the reflections include:

- Does the menu allow for choice – so students have to reflect and think about their nutritional needs that day?
- Do students have the chance to taste and experiment with new foods?
- Does the model teach students about nutrition and healthy eating choices?
- Does the model promote opportunities for students to talk about the culture of food and emotional connection with food?
- Does the model provide students with the opportunity to learn about and experience food handling, food preparation, and cooking skills?

"It is important for students to be included. When students can taste new foods and provide feedback about whether or not the food should be on the menu, the kids are exposed to new healthy food choices."

– Staff member, Edmonton Public Schools

The team is encouraged by the positive response from the school staff and administration so far.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Once the folks who are providing leadership to this work have engaged, discussed and planned, it is important for them to engage with the staff, students and parents/guardians of the school community. The purpose of this early engagement is to share information about the pilot, gather their thoughts/feelings around this opportunity and answer any questions they may have. These conversations inform details around how best to proceed with implementation, empower the school community, and build excitement and support over the long run. This 'buy-in' is important when you are looking to go beyond the basics of feeding hungry children and to actually inform and shape a school culture that builds long-term capacity and lifelong habits around healthy eating.

It is critical to invest time on the front end of the initiative for discussion between the Central District representative, the school leadership, and any potential community service provider. This time enables a shared understanding of the approach to school nutrition.

ENSURING NUTRITION IS UNIVERSALLY AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS

At Inglewood School, the Nutrition Pilot Program will build upon the existing culture of healthy eating and active living that has developed and rooted at the school over the past several years when they have been an Apple School. There is some breakfast/snack support currently being provided for students and the school has built a culture around snacks. Many students bring a snack from home, but teachers pause instruction and take 10 minutes or so to have the snack. During this time, students and the teachers often talk about various food choices, and students read and compare the food labels of things brought for the snack. These conversations have resulted in students making "healthy food choices." The pilot program will introduce lunch support into the school community.

E4C will be the provider of this support and the Inglewood model will be one that enables students to eat fully from the food provided in the pilot or to enhance the food they brought from home. For example, on any given day a student may have a sandwich, apple and vegetable sticks through the nutrition pilot lunch program. Another student may bring rice and chicken from home and choose to eat an apple from the nutrition program.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - High Prairie

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

High Prairie School Division worked with Alberta Health Services (AHS) to review all food choices and ensure they met the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* (ANGCY). At High Prairie Elementary the model was based on an existing Breakfast Club and collaborative discussions with AHS and other jurisdictions in Edmonton. The model is a universal program with an emphasis on healthy and fresh foods. The staff are diligent about noting students' food items when they have snack time. Students are coached to select their healthy choice first. If a child does not have a healthy option, is missing a lunch, or needs an addition, they are able to access food supplied by the pilot project. All staff are given access to food storage to meet student needs as they arise. There is no stigma attached to eating. The nutrition coordinator makes adjustments to the numbers of lunches and snacks prepared based on a two-day cycle. The flexibility of the program allows for an increasing number of students accessing healthy snacks and the Breakfast Club. In fact, more space had to be allotted to meet the increased volume of students attending before the first bell.

Most students at High Prairie Elementary were not familiar with all the healthy choices they could access at school. Each class was given the opportunity to have a taste-testing and discuss preferences. Many students only knew prepackaged and processed foods. Although the school is in a rural First Nations region, cultural foods, are not part of daily life for this generation. The school brings in cultural foods like Saskatoon berries and blueberries.

At École Routhier School, each child has access to snack bins in the classroom. Bins include apples, oranges, yogurt, cheese, and vegetables. Students can take part in the program at any time. Staff observe the students, and when needed, will place a phone call to parents to explain the program and invite their child's participation. The school worked with community resources, AHS, and local grocers to design a bagged lunch program. Teams of wellness coordinators run the programs from within each school and there are high school student volunteers helping out. At École Routhier, an educational assistant orders sandwiches, wraps and snacks from Falher Co-op, and works with student helpers to fill the snack bins.

The population at both schools is comprised of students from a wide variety of cultures. In February, the schools began to introduce a variety of snacks such as hummus, tzatziki and bannock to expose students to different foods.

INTERESTING FACTS

High Prairie Elementary School High Prairie, AB

- 300 K-6 students
- 70 breakfasts served daily
- 70 lunches served daily
- Approximately 70 snacks served daily

École Routhier School Falher, AB

- 240 K-6 students
- 32 lunches served daily
- Approximately 50 snacks served daily

INNOVATION

The wellness coordinator teams will continue to explore ways of improving and sustaining children's access to healthy food. The team continues to track snacks and meals made available to calculate appropriate quantities of food to decrease the amount of waste. The team is also discussing best practices for delivering meals in a logical, responsible manner, and ways to continue using the very helpful student volunteers.

"One of the biggest challenges has been the quality of fruit and produce that is available in the region."

– Staff member, High Prairie School Division

At High Prairie Elementary, conversations with the local high school may engage more of their students in the preparation and/or distribution of food. Currently only a few help with breakfast. Through the health curriculum, students discuss the benefits of healthy eating, maximizing growth, staying free of disease, and feeling better.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

At High Prairie, a partnership with Freson Bros. grocers has developed and at École Routhier, a partnership with Falher Co-op. These partnerships have been a huge success as they are able to offer nutritious produce at a very reasonable cost.

High Prairie Elementary school sends home notes in agendas, and uses the monthly newsletter, radio messaging, and face-to-face conversations to communicate with parents and guardians. In response, the school often receives complimentary messages. When feedback is provided to request changes, the school acknowledges the message, and the team brainstorms ways to make changes in the program's operation.

At École Routhier, communication with parents has been through phone calls or conversations after the initial letter introducing the program. Daily and weekly communication with the grocery store is made to adjust amounts of lunches ordered, or to discuss vegetable and fruit orders and prices.

RESULTS

The feedback from students, parents, teachers and the community has been very positive thus far.

In February, École Routhier students were surveyed regarding the contents of lunches offered. The data will be analyzed to determine if any alterations are needed. Any feedback received from students or parents/guardians is greatly appreciated and considered as the school moves through the pilot program.

Students are trying many fresh and healthy foods they have never experienced, which has proven to be a success. Teachers have reported students accessing the nutrition pilot program are more responsive in class and have a better sense of belonging.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Holy Family Catholic

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

At Holy Family School in Grimshaw, the goal is to enhance the twice weekly "Grab and Go" breakfast program to a daily program that adheres to the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. Following the same guidelines, the goal at St. Stephen's School is to implement a new universal, high quality hot lunch program.

At Holy Family School, an outside vendor, CK Next Generation, works with the school to provide the breakfasts. As a local restaurant owner, the vendor has previous experience with implementing healthy food programs in the community. The teachers in the school coordinate the program and work with the vendor to make any necessary adjustments to the menus. Each day, the breakfasts are delivered and the teachers distribute them to the students in their home rooms. Portion sizes are adjusted for the Kindergarten to Grade 6 students. The program is flexible. If students want to save their breakfasts for later in the day, they can wait to eat their food.

At St. Stephen's School, the program is run in-house. A coordinator works with teachers to develop quality menus, monitor food waste, and keep an eye on appropriate portion sizes for the different age groups. Students pick up the main meal and have their choice of fruit and dairy. One challenge has been to ensure that the lunch coordinator is not overtaxed with purchasing, prepping, cooking and cleaning on a daily basis. The volunteers, both in-school and from the community, are making the program a success. As the program develops, the school continues to purchase kitchen items to improve efficiency. An industrial dishwasher was purchased so the school could phase out paper plates.

Valleyview has a large percent of oilfield workers. As employment in this sector is currently unstable, many families are struggling with lower income, so the lunch program is very welcome. While some of the families may be able to provide the basics for breakfast and lunch, they may not be providing all of the food groups.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Sixty-five per cent of the student population at St. Stephen's School is First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and as with Holy Family School, there also is a sizeable proportion of Filipino students. There are many opportunities to celebrate a variety of cultural foods in the pilot project.

INTERESTING FACTS

Holy Family School

Grimshaw, AB

- 140 K-6 students
- 140 hot breakfasts served daily

St. Stephen's School

Valleyview, AB

- 193 K-6 students
- 154 hot lunches served daily

BUILDING CAPACITY

The Minister of Education visited St. Stephen's School and the school presented him with a book illustrating what the lunch program means to students and their families. Another capacity-building aspect of the program is that junior high students at St. Stephen's School have a Foods option course 40 minutes before lunch, and through it, are able to assist in the preparation of the hot lunch program.

"Our breakfast program has taken the pressure off parents and allowed students to start the day off being fed with healthy foods."

– Staff member, Holy Family School Division

At Holy Family School, student helpers deliver the breakfast bins in the morning, help out in the classroom, and help collect any uneaten food. At St. Stephen's School, students are taking ownership of the program. They help with clean-up and recycling. Students show a great deal of respect for the program, are grateful for the lunches.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Holy Family School communicates with stakeholders through social media, school newsletters and school council meetings. At St. Stephen's School, community members volunteer to come in and help with food preparation, serving and clean-up. One couple who has embraced the program is retired and childless. They are finding great joy in participating in the program and helping out with the lunches served at St. Stephen's, showing that the program can provide for community needs in unexpected ways.

Weekly menus are sent home so families can be more aware of the foods that their children have at school each day.

Holy Family School Division is in partnership with Ever Active Schools, a provincial initiative designed to assist school communities in addressing and creating healthy school communities.

RESULTS

Feedback from parents, teachers and students is very positive. Forms of feedback include daily anecdotal comments from parents and guardians as they pick up students after school, as well as information gathered through surveys during parent-teacher interviews.

Parents comment that they put less pressure on their child to eat before going to school, and that they have more peace of mind knowing their children are being fed one hot meal a day at school.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Livingstone Range

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

At Livingstone Range School Division, the goal was to create a Nutrition Pilot Program in two elementary schools. Both schools enhanced the existing breakfast program to an improved high quality standard breakfast meal program, implemented a new quality lunch program, and have healthy snacks made available to all students throughout the day.

Each child has the opportunity to have breakfast and two snacks every day, with lunch once per week. Meals are planned a month in advance with menus posted on the school division's website. The contracted coordinator works with assigned school personnel at both sites and ensures all meals and snacks, which are all prepared in house, adhere to the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. The model was created through a collaborative process involving two school administrators, central office administrators, and other school staff. The two schools are continuing to share program plans and collaboratively develop the model.

The school division conducted a pre-program survey to determine the healthy eating habits that exist with students and their families, and the survey will be conducted again at the end of the current school year.

W.A. Day School purchased two additional fridges and one stove to support the program.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Livingstone Range is a large rural jurisdiction in eight distinctively different communities. Canyon School neighbours on the Piikani Reserve and is located in Pincher Creek where there is a very high First Nations population. At W.A. Day School, the plan is to celebrate the diversity of the various cultures within the school through the connection with traditional foods. The school uses the Canadian First Nations, Métis and Inuit Food Guide, as well as relying on the expertise of various community members who are passionate about sharing their culture and foods.

Students are being brought together through food, and sharing meals creates more opportunities for students to interact with each other.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Livingstone Range has engaged students in menu creation and in preparing and serving food.

The division is also partnering with community agencies and support groups to offer food safety and security educational opportunities for students.

INTERESTING FACTS

W. A. Day School

Fort Macleod, AB

- 330 K-6 students
- 225 to 250 breakfasts, lunches and snacks served daily

Canyon Elementary School

Pincher Creek, AB

- 280 K-6 students
- 225 to 250 breakfasts, lunches and snacks served daily

A parent is interested in starting a “farm to plate” field trip with curriculum connections and has organized beef producer, dairy farmer, wheat grower and greenhouse partners.

Canyon School initiated a Life Skills program not only to help provide the lunch program, but to teach students how to prepare healthy meals. It also has a Green School Initiative Committee that is developing school gardens and a compost program.

Partners who may help out with building gardens and greenhouses include the high school students and local greenhouses. The latter may provide educational opportunities within their greenhouses so that new greenhouses wouldn't necessarily have to be built.

“We are an open community who synergizes with stakeholders to create a collaborative environment.”

– Staff member, Canyon School

INNOVATION

Livingstone School Division is taking an innovative approach to build capacity. W. A. Day School has developed a partnership with a local grocery store to support the school's “Pick-of-the-Week” menu created by the students. Items such as bread, meat, cheese, fruits and vegetables are purchased by the families using the school's punch card system. Families are then required to make the lunches for that week using the provided menu. School teachers closely monitor student lunches to ensure that what is purchased is actually being used in lunches.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

It's very exciting and engaging for students to be able to participate in creating the menus.

Extra Foods supermarket supplies a majority of the program foods and also provides volunteers to the schools. Parents have also volunteered. The Fort Macleod Aquaponics Greenhouse group comes to work with students in creating an outdoor classroom, as well as helping them build a small scale aquaponics model that will be used in the learning commons. Kids First Family Centre provides a space in their kitchen area and offers supports with programs such as “now we're cooking” and “kitchen safe.”

Partners in health, education and community sectors are working together to advance school health. Canyon School purchases as many food and supply items as possible through local businesses. As Canyon School becomes more proficient with its Life Skills program, the plan is to invite local restaurants to instruct students on the efficient preparation and serving of meals.

Canyon School communicates with stakeholders through newsletters, emails, staff meetings and school council meetings. The local paper will also be doing a story on the pilot program.

RESULTS

As the schools collect data throughout the pilot, they are able to make changes that enhance the opportunities for success.

Flexibility and adaptability are at the core of the program. Both quantitative and qualitative results are collected and shared. The program is designed to change to meet the needs of the students.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Medicine Hat

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

As existing kitchen capacity is limited, Vincent Massey School hired an outside vendor, Shooting Star Events, to deliver meals. A Nutritional Pilot Program coordinator and a nutritional assistant were also hired. Parent volunteers and Grade 6 student helpers trained in the home food safety program are also helping to work towards the school's program goal to implement a new, fresh food service meal model to replace the previous limited sandwich menu.

Some of the school's limitations include having a small sink, no dishwasher and limited space. The vendor has supplied the school with bio-degradable cutlery, plates and bowls, and this promotes the school's efforts to be environmentally-friendly.

A monthly meal plan is posted on the school website, as well as emailed to all families. The vendor has 16 meal plans that are rotated on a monthly basis. The families and the children discuss and decide when they will participate. The daily breakfast is available to all students, as well as a lunch to those who self-identify. Throughout the day, there are nutritional snacks for all students to consume, starting at 9:30 a.m. and available to the end of the school day. The vendor delivers meals to the school on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Each day, students are served in two groups, with the lower elementary students being served first while the upper elementary students go outside for recess, then they switch. The staggered lunch hour gives students a longer time to eat and a greater range in the schoolyard at recess. The process of getting the meals to the students takes about 10 minutes per group.

Grade 6 students are enthusiastic about their food safety program. Through the food safety program and the pilot project in general, there has been an increase in student engagement and a positive impact on learning. Teachers are reporting that they see a higher level of energy and engagement from students in the afternoon. Through conversations with parents/guardians and the School Council, there is a heightened awareness of the importance of nutrition and the fun of trying new foods at home.

The school has been actively promoting student awareness and self-identification of hunger while offering access to vegetables and fruit throughout the day. Teachers are also becoming more aware of student needs to eat and drink when hungry, and the program allows for more hands-on approaches to learning about nutrition. Staff have noted that when students have escalating behaviour, the offer of food often serves as a calming tool, giving the students an opportunity to self-regulate, by taking a walk to go and get something to eat.

Students are eating when they are hungry. Bananas and cucumbers are choices favoured over apples and oranges. The homemade granola bars with yogurt are a big hit, and parents have been asking for the recipe. Staff report seeing happier students who often, during inside recess, leave their computer games to go and get fruit and vegetable snacks that are set out.

INTERESTING FACTS

Vincent Massey School
Medicine Hat, AB

- 305 K-6 students
- 35 breakfasts served daily
- 214 to 245 lunches served daily

INNOVATION

Planning has taken into account the cultural diversity in the school, particularly with the higher numbers of refugee families. A suggestion box is open in the food serving area, and a survey has been sent out. In addition, teachers post the meals for the week in the classrooms. Reminders are sent to parents through the school's automated reminder system. Staff members are surveyed at monthly staff meetings regarding what they feel is working and what needs changing. Data is showing that more families want kids exposed to an increased variety of food, especially vegetables, and are in favour of planning and preparing meals together.

"I see other people trying things and I want to try them too."

– Student, Vincent Massey School

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Medicine Hat School jurisdiction has a low socio-economic status, and with the economic downturn affecting the city's reliance on oil and gas jobs, there has been an increase in children coming to school without lunches or snacks. Because of the increase in refugee families, the school district hired two full-time English as a Second Language teachers and four educational assistants to support the new students.

The jurisdiction partners with a local greenhouse, The Cucumber Man, to access fresh vegetables weekly. A Medicine Hat College biology professor is helping to bring in a "seed to table" component for the program, while Neubauer Farms has opened its doors to student field trips to further support the seed to table concept. Medicine Hat Co-op provides local, fresh foods and produce, and another local company is providing milk and milk delivery.

RESULTS

Since the program began, the overall attendance at the school has improved significantly. As the jurisdiction works with the program and the school, and aligns its budget, the notion of bringing Southview School into the program is being investigated. Southview has the second lowest socio-economic status in the district and also has a diverse ethnic population.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Northern Lights School Division

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Vera M. Welsh Elementary School's goal for the Nutrition Pilot Project is to use J.A. Williams High School to provide food preparation and delivery of a high quality, nutritional hot lunch meal program that meets the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* (ANGCY). The collaboration is proving to be extraordinary for both schools.

Working together with the APPLE School Health Facilitator, the principals reviewed the ANGCY binder and focused on "choose most often" menu items. Later, two Alberta Health Services dieticians were brought onboard for menu review.

The idea for the dual-school involvement came from Superintendent Rick Cusson, who thought there could be a true partnership approach. The elementary school principal shared the concept with staff and they overwhelmingly supported the idea, particularly liking the approach of having students eat like a family unit in the school classroom. From there, a system was created to serve the food quickly and efficiently. Non-homeroom staff supervision duties now include serving food, while homeroom teachers bring in the cutlery and napkins, pour milk, and supervise.

In the early days, a Health Inspector described necessary changes to the kitchen and equipment requirements. A dishwasher and dishes were ordered, and the school division's maintenance department gutted the existing kitchen and retrofitted it to code. The inspector outlined the three-sink dishwashing method and the need to have handwashing stations near the food. The layout of the school is a large square, so each corner became a serving station.

INNOVATION

After serving the meal, staff check in with students and note any trends. If trends are noted (for example: *too spicy*), a text is sent to the high school to make changes.

A Grade 3 class is creating a survey to ask students what meals they like and what they would like for lunch, integrating the use of technology and mathematics into the project.

During the time meals are served, the servers add curricular outcomes by asking students to find a rhyming word for something they are eating or emphasizing the articulation of the foods in the meal and having students repeat the words.

A Red Seal Chef and the culinary arts students at J. A. Williams High School prepare, transport and serve meals to the elementary school students daily. This is a win-win situation where high school students learn and practice new skills; for some, it was the first time holding raw vegetables in their hands. They are learning about preparing healthy, fresh meals, rather than frozen/pre-packaged products they are used to in their homes.

INTERESTING FACTS

Vera M. Welsh Elementary
Lac La Biche, AB

- 330 K-3 Students
- 54 per cent of students are self-identified as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
- 300 hot lunches served daily

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The school division is considering bringing in Grade 8 students at Aurora Middle School to assist with food service.

The collaboration with the high school is working extremely well. Including taking into account allergy restrictions, they have pureed cauliflower into macaroni and cheese, added spinach to spaghetti sauce, and pureed turnips with quinoa into meatloaf. All food is prepared at the high school; there is no processed food.

A local business has committed to donating one case of fresh fruit per month.

In response to parent interest, Vera M. Welsh school is planning an *Eat Lunch with Your Child Day*. Parents will RSVP so the high school caterers can be prepared. Parents will also receive handouts of Canada's Food Guide and portion size information, and will have the opportunity to chat with school staff and the APPLE Health Facilitator.

"Time is devoted at staff meetings to review the challenges and successes, so we can continue to have a better program where more students are eating."

– Staff Member, Northern Lights School Division

RESULTS

The division's program team tracks the number of students eating, as well as student attendance. Student and parent surveys bring in more focused data and qualitative research is gathered from school staff and school council meetings. When analyzing the data, the team looks for trends about what students are not eating. The team shares results with schools, senior administration, school staff and parents. Responses have included menu refinement such as adding a larger variety of raw vegetable and fruit options, and adding salad, stew and bannock.

The team has noticed a reduction in the amount of juice boxes students bring to school. Students are drinking milk and water.

Many parents have stopped sending food to school. This has increased the amount of fruit handed out for daily snacks. Any foods that are leftover during the day are wrapped and refrigerated and are being used by the out of school care program to feed students after school.

Servers (non-homeroom teachers, administration and support staff) report that talking with approximately 80 students each day has helped form and strengthen relationships with students.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Red Deer Public

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

At Fairview Elementary School the goals are to enhance the existing minimal breakfast program to a high quality standard breakfast program and implement a new nutritious lunch program, a "Grab and Go" snack at end of the day, daily milk delivery, and 'Toasting Days' throughout the year to introduce new foods on toast. Menu ideas are made in collaboration with a nutritionist from Alberta Health Services.

The school division chose to hire an outside vendor to prepare the meals, and at the last minute, the vendor backed out. The cook from Lindsay Thurber High School cafeteria was brought on-board. She had already been following the Red Deer Public School Division Nutrition Policy and the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* in her daily meal preparation. Within one week, she also found it difficult to meet the commitment. To help out, the school's Nutrition Coordinator took on fruit and vegetable preparation. The head caretaker has taken on the role of picking up the food.

The school has two fridges and hopes to purchase another fridge at an upcoming donation event. The school purchased a freezer, toasters and blenders. Reduction of garbage is a concern. Washing plates for 215 students twice per day is environmentally friendly, but adds to the workload.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

A large percentage of the students require a halal diet with no pork. The cost of providing halal food is high and accessibility can be limited. The caterer has class lists identifying cultural needs and allergies so that options can be made available for students who need them, and halal menu options are clearly marked.

The school celebrates cultural diversity on a continuous basis. A potluck supper is a good example - families are invited to bring a meal representative of their culture. The school has been sensitive to the fact that many foods are new for many of the students. Even foods that are common in Canada—such as bagels—have been met with curiosity by students who have never tried them before. The school is considering how they can integrate First Nations foods, such as bannock, in the future.

INNOVATION

The school continues to encourage healthy eating both through health classes and with the support of the District Comprehensive School Health Coordinator.

INTERESTING FACTS

Fairview Elementary School

- 230 Pre- K-5 students
- 65 per cent of students speak English as a Second Language
- 215 breakfasts served daily
- 215 lunches served daily
- 215 'Grab and Go' snacks available daily
- 215 smoothies served, once per month
- 215 Toast Tasting Tuesdays served, once a month

Having the students in the English as a Second Language classroom lead the Smoothie Days has been an excellent opportunity for students learning English to learn new vocabulary and practice their conversation skills.

The school is working with Save-On-Foods to determine what produce is on sale weekly to reduce costs. Fruits and vegetables purchased at Save-On-Foods are prepared as an addition to the main course being prepared at Lindsay Thurber High School. There is team of students that arrive early to help adult helpers deliver the 'Grab and Go' snacks to each classrooms.

"Food is impacting the way that the school can offer support to the students who are struggling to maintain focus and engage in their learning...starts with filling their tummies."

– staff member, Red Deer Public Schools

The school describes their action research model as a "trial and error" approach—one that has high flexibility. The school continually adjusts to meet dietary and menu needs and preferences; to ensure the correct amount of milk, fruits and vegetables are being ordered; and to allow adequate time for the Nutrition Coordinator to complete her duties.

The school is building capacity as staff learn about ordering food, ordering milk, taking food preparation and safety courses, and through ongoing learning about the experience as a whole. The school principal works daily to build the capacity of the School Council Chair who is coordinating the program at the school. The Nutrition Coordinator has created a substitute's binder for the days she is away.

COLLABORATING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Save-On Foods has been partnering with the school to provide fresh fruit and veggies.

School staff and other stakeholders are approached formally and informally to provide feedback so that the school may respond appropriately. Families are encouraged to pack a snack if they are concerned their child will not eat the food provided in the menu that day. However, most families take advantage of meals being provided through the program.

When the school communicated the program and menu to families, they needed to accommodate many families in the school community that speak languages other than English as a first language. Red Deer Public School Division has contacts through Central Alberta Refugee Effort that can support the school in translating communication to families.

The school has found that children who sit side-by-side are attempting new foods. Some children are asking for seconds, and some are surprised at their enjoyment. Children with sensory challenges and who need time away from the classroom to 'reset' are asked, "Are you hungry?" and then they are able to access leftover foods and milk.

RESULTS

The school district and school staff felt an urgency to get food going for students that needed it. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to involve more stakeholders in the planning. The team appreciates the ongoing teacher and staff input regarding ideas about ways to improve, thoughts about what is going well, and the sharing of feedback from the greater school community.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - St. Paul School District

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The goals for St. Paul School District's nine participating schools are:

- to enhance the current morning toast/cereal/granola programs with fresh fruits/vegetables and milk/cheese/yogurt, increasing the nutritious value to meet the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*;
- to make this available to all students in eight of the schools (AE, HE, EP, SPEC, GA, TH, EM, and NM); and for the ninth school, (THM), to introduce a fruit snack program twice a week; and
- to provide free lunches to students in need at seven of the schools (AE, EP, SPEC, GA, TH, EM, and NM schools).

There are ongoing on-site consultations with Alberta Health Services to create a flexible and responsive approach in each school. Each school reviews not only its breakfast program and menu, but also vending machines, canteens, etc. Key people in each school, including administration, are involved in identifying ways to promote healthy eating for students. A registered dietitian has consulted with three schools to date, and the intention is for all schools to have access to do so.

SPEC and EP are currently using outside vendors for lunch options. Food is prepared in house at AE, GA, TH, NM, and HE schools. A number of schools work with the Second Harvest Program, a volunteer not-for-profit organization that redistributes produce that is still good to eat, but not attractive. Depending on the school, nutrition programs are run by volunteers or volunteer staff. In some schools, staff members have a small amount of assigned time to run the pilot program.

There are many examples of school-specific approaches to staffing for the Nutrition Pilot Project. AE has hired an individual for 2.5 hours per day to prepare, serve and clean up after the universal snack program and also has a canteen where they make homemade subs.

Two hours per day have been added onto the workload of the designated staff member at HE who already spends 80 minutes daily to prepare and serve food. The schools will be introducing a taster program to prevent wastage as much as possible.

INTERESTING FACTS

Ashmont Elementary School (AE)

- 295 K-6 students
- 289 breakfasts served daily
- 10 to 20 lunches served daily

Heinsburg Community School (HE)

- 86 K-6 Students
- 86 breakfasts served daily
- 86 lunches served daily

Elk Point Elementary School (EP)

- 291 K-6 Students
- 98 breakfasts served daily
- 2 to 5 lunches served daily

Glen Avon School (GA)

- 368 K-6 Students
- 122 breakfasts served daily
- 15 lunches served daily

Two Hills School (TH)

- 129 K-6 Students
- 129 breakfasts served daily
- 16 to 20 lunches served daily

New Myrnam School (NM)

- 70 K-6 Students
- 70 breakfasts served daily
- 2 lunches served daily

École Mallaig School (EM)

- 129 K-6 Students
- 129 breakfasts served daily
- 2 lunches served daily

École St. Paul Elementary School (SPEC)

- 358 K-6 Students
- 116 breakfasts served daily
- 4 lunches served daily

Two Hills Mennonite School (THM)

- 415 K-6 Students
- 415 fruit snacks twice/week

BUILDING CAPACITY

The project has been a strong catalyst for change and improvement in the wellness culture of the schools. To highlight the educational component, teachers may involve students in snack-making and/or discussions about why certain food choices are the best. Many staff members have indicated that in the past students have shown that they do not like many of the “Choose Most Often” choices; however, the professionals are confident that if the schools keep offering these better choices, and support their offerings with targeted education and promotion (e.g., posters, displays of class projects comparing nutritional values of different foods, etc.), students will be encouraged to try them.

“It’s amazing what the kids will share when they are helping to prepare foods in the morning.”

– Counsellor, Glen Avon School

LOCAL FLAVOUR

St. Paul School District falls within a culturally diverse area. This is very much reflected in how work is done in each school and at a system level. Individual schools are bringing together teams that can help promote cultural diversity in the program, including instructional assistants, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Liaison Worker, the Success Coach, the head secretary, and administration.

One school noted there is less disruption to the instructional day for some students as the school is no longer trying to contact the families of children without lunch and make appropriate arrangements to replace the lunch or send the child home for lunch.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Partnerships with health professionals have increased and strengthened. Lakeland Primary Care Network has also hired a dietitian who is available to support with resources. At this time “purchasing partnerships” between schools are being discussed in order to increase discount buying power – especially for remote rural schools. This will take more time to unfold.

Volunteers are important collaborators. In some cases, they are supported by high school work experience students. There is a series of Nutrition Pilot social media posts planned for the upcoming months – these will be coordinated by health promotion work done by Success Coaches in the schools.

The question of detailed feedback from stakeholders will be on upcoming agendas with administrators.

RESULTS

The District’s Nutrition Pilot Project team is happy to be able to have such a large number of children benefit from the pilot.

THM met with a public health dietitian whose service area includes Two Hills. There will be ongoing follow-up as improvements are implemented. This consultative process takes time, but is proving to be highly effective as it is interactive and contextualized to the school, with the hope of long-lasting changes to school wellness culture.

Many staff members were surprised to learn about the recommendations for 100 per cent “Choose Most Often” for elementary schools. They have expressed an interest in learning more about the foods recommended in each category and having access to resources that will provide the nutritional information on a variety of pre-packaged single servings.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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June 2017

Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Westwind Division

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Cardston Elementary School's goal for the Nutrition Pilot Project is to provide high quality, nutritional breakfast/ lunch meals and snack items that meet the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* (ANGCY), and to make these available to all students in the school.

The school already had a breakfast program and is now using the project to increase the quality and nutritional value by providing a nutritious daily meal using fresh ingredients. Food choices were made in collaboration with Alberta Health Services. The menu itself is one of student choice, and students have access to fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the day. The division's steering committee will continue to work closely with the Alberta Health Services Coordinator and Public Health Dietician to assess and plan the health of the school community.

The school cafeteria staff, along with trained student leadership students, are running the pilot project from within the school. An outside food service provider, Sysco, delivers a variety of food items twice a week to ensure quality and freshness.

All classrooms have bins loaded with nutritious 'grab and go' items that are available to students throughout the day.

The breakfasts and 'grab and go' snacks are the most popular. With 23 buses running each day, students arrive at school hungry as some are riding for long periods of time.

Twenty-eight per cent of Cardston Elementary School students are First Nations, Métis and Inuit, and throughout the year, there are assemblies that focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture through song and dance.

INNOVATION

A key piece of the project at Cardston Elementary School is for all students to understand the concept of "seed to table." Plants fit into the Grade 4 curriculum; however, all students will have opportunities to observe and work in the sensory garden at the school.

Staff at the school are also excited about plans to implement a young chef's program.

Back orders for chairs, a convection oven, fridges, dishwasher and a conveyor toaster have now been fulfilled, and the conveyor toaster, for one, is a big hit, affording whole wheat toast and English muffins. The initial challenge to find storage and fridge space for perishable products lessened when the three large fridges were delivered. The school had originally housed small fridges in each classroom, but found that the teachers did not want them in the classroom.

INTERESTING FACTS

Cardston Elementary School

- 600 K-5 students
- 150 breakfasts served daily
- 20 lunches served daily
- 300 snacks served daily
- 600 bi-monthly fruit and vegetable tastings
- 600 monthly Friday morning smoothies

RESULTS

The school has conducted student surveys and will have another one attached to the Tell Them From Me survey to provide more detailed feedback. Adapting to the feedback and the flexibility of the program are key strengths. Each day that there are leftover brown bag lunches, they are placed in fridges, and by the end of the day, the lunches are gone.

"The socialization of students as they interact during breakfast in the gathering area has been a pleasant surprise."

– Staff member, Westwind School Division

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The school has a working relationship with Chinook Lodge retirement home, which assembles the brown bag lunches. According to the recreation director of the lodge, the eight patrons manning the sandwich assembly each morning enjoy their work and feel a connection to the school. Parent volunteers make smoothies two times per month. On these days, they make 450 smoothies per morning. The school also welcomes two adult helpers with disabilities who assist in the mornings. Student volunteers help out, too. At least 12 students are involved with the breakfast, 'Grab and Go' bins and lunches each day.

The team is in regular discussions with the kitchen help—about everything from menus, maintenance, equipment and timelines, to products. Sysco is planning to send chefs to the school to train and support kitchen staff and student leadership at no extra cost.

RESULTS

When the pilot project first began, it was really busy. Some students felt a need to hoard items and take more than they needed.

The team plans to deliver some quick educational skits so the students can gain a greater awareness of nutrition and foods. Some topics being considered include: What it means to be hungry; Why nutrition is important; How often and how much; In the gathering area or in the classroom; Waste; and Clean up after you're done.

The school has many success stories about improved student attendance. Administrators note that there are fewer office referrals. Does that mean that full stomachs mean fewer issues? It's not certain, but evidence is pointing that way.

The school is eager to get their keyhole gardens up and running to reinforce the "seed to table" concept.

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Alberta Education School Nutrition Pilot 2016/17 - Wetaskiwin Public Schools

BUILDING A FLEXIBLE PROGRAM WITH LOCAL FLAVOUR

At Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools, Hope Mission is the food vendor for three of the schools and Ponderosa City is the vendor for Alder Flats School. The vendors are compliant with the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* (ANGCY). All staff who handle food completed an online food handler's certificate. The vendor buys in bulk at costs lower cost than individual schools can access.

To build its working model, the division used an informal, collaborative approach with Wetaskiwin's local Alberta Health Services dietician and Hope Mission. Each of the four principals meet to exchange ideas, but on a school-to-school basis, there is increasing individualization, to fit individual school needs. At Alder Flats, for example, it was challenging to get a vendor to come to their more remote location.

Initially, the division planned to serve hot food; however, they decided against it in December not only because of the prohibitive costs of retrofitting kitchens with commercial dishwashers, but also because fresh foods are equally nourishing, and require less staff time to administer. In the first week of January, the money that had been budgeted for dishwashers was reallocated for an additional 30 meals per day, shared among the four schools.

École Parkdale, Millet and Norwood students have access to breakfast through the 'grab and go' carts set up at school entrances. The carts are stocked with dairy, protein, grain and fruit options. Millet also has a sit-down program, which fosters social opportunities for students. For lunch, all students with known needs have a packaged lunch placed in their lockers or delivered to the classroom by staff. Students can also seek out the Family School Liaison for access to lunches. Many run 'Fun Clubs' at the same time so that the stigma of having no lunch is avoided. The jurisdiction continues to build capacity through its work with the Food Security Team, which is a multi-agency group focused on supporting schools to feed vulnerable students.

INTERESTING FACTS

École Parkdale

Wetaskiwin

- 276 K-7 students
- 50 breakfasts served daily
- 61 lunches served daily

Norwood Elementary

Westaskiwin

- 195 K-4 students
- 15 breakfasts served daily
- 42 lunches served daily

Millet Elementary

- 150 K-4 students
- 20 breakfasts served daily;
- 32 lunches served daily

Alder Flats Elementary

- 155 K-6 students
- 46 lunches served daily

-
- The division has a Wellness Leader at each school
 - Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools has been in partnership with Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the School Community Health Education Partnership for over 20 years

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The cultural diversity of the community in the Wetaskiwin area includes a significant First Nations and Métis population and a growing number of immigrant families. Schools report a significant number of families are transient. Meeting the needs of the culturally diverse student body has been a priority for the school division for many years. At two of the schools in the program, classrooms are smudged with sweetgrass and students are invited to start their day with a sweetgrass prayer. All schools celebrate cultural diversity through special events like hoop dancing, round dances, and cultural diversity days.

"I can feel the love spread through my whole body."

– Student, École Parkdale School

INNOVATION

Action research includes surveying students, annual focus groups, focused conversations with parent council/advisory groups for feedback, menu monitoring completed by an Alberta Health Services Dietician, and monthly meetings between the program director and the vendor. Allocating Education Assistant time has proven to be critical to the success of the project.

The jurisdiction would like to provide no-cost kitchen space to Hope Mission to reduce facility and transportation costs and to provide leadership and volunteerism opportunities to students in nearby schools. Another innovation in the works is to partner with Hope Mission and the Boys & Girls Club of Wetaskiwin to develop a garden program.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

In addition to the information on their website, the division communicated with parents/guardians at the outset with a letter. Follow-up communication includes parent council and advisory groups, and the Native Liaison and Family School Liaison workers. Other partners include: Alberta Health Services, the Food Security Team, the Board of Trustees, and the School Community Health Education Partnership Committee. The schools are still looking for alternate sources for snacks, and parent groups are interested in providing special occasion meals for the students.

The message that there is still a need to "close the gap" for hungry children is being sent to parents and the community. Students with hungry pre-school siblings at home require food bundles to take home so that they don't feel guilty about eating at school. The Wetaskiwin Food Bank has recently started up an emergency backpack program to support 25 students at each of École Parkdale School and Norwood School. At the request of Hope Mission, the Director of Support Services has facilitated an introduction and connection to two school authorities in Maskwacis (Miyo Wahkohtowin and Nipisihkopahk). Initial conversations may lead to partnership and community development.

RESULTS

Alder Flats School is pleased with its Red Seal Chef providing high quality food and fresh-baked bread.

Staff note that students are more attentive in class. Students who began the program by hoarding food are now more trusting of their source of food. The stigma of using the program is greatly reduced, because all students are invited to participate.

School recycling programs are working well, but there is still a need to reduce disposable products.

Many students and families are now heavily reliant on the program. In response, the division has implemented an "Employee Payroll Contribution" function through its website whereby employees can request an automatic payroll deduction to support hungry students at any school.

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